

UK Military Bases

By Dave Webb

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space

Presented at:

“The International Congress on Military Bases
and their importance for global wars”

Kaiserslauter, Germany

8-9 September 2017

Before going on to look at the US bases that are stationed in the UK, it is worth remembering that the UK has its own military presence around the world. Some are the remanence of the old British Empire, while others represent new interests but all Britain's permanent military installations are in British Overseas Territories (BOTs) or former colonies which retain close diplomatic ties with the UK.



A UK Permanent Joint Operating Base (PJOB) operates from **Cyprus** including a large airbase (RAF Akrotiri), the joint signals intelligence stations (RAF Troodos & Ayios Nikolaos) – supporting some 3,200 military personnel.

Germany has hosted the 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade and support since the end of WW2. Current plans are to remove all UK army units from Germany by 2020, in line with the announcements made in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and rebase them inside the UK. Since 2010 82% of the 20,000 Service personnel based in Germany

and their families have relocated to the UK and, as of 2015, 5,200 troops remain (see: <http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/33834.aspx>).

The Falkland Islands (Malvenas) is home for the British Forces South Atlantic Islands. It includes 4 RAF Typhoons and Voyager and Hercules aircraft; a Type 45 destroyer or Type 23 frigate, HMS Clyde. There are also several early-warning and airspace control radar stations placed at tactically critical locations, and a deep-water port at East Cove – a total of around 1,600 personnel.

In **Gibraltar** around 1,000 maintain a military presence at facilities including the airbase RAF Gibraltar and the Port of Gibraltar.

In **Brunei** some 900 are deployed on a British Garrison that hosts routine jungle warfare courses for the British Army and Royal Marines.

British Army Training Unit **Kenya** is used mainly to train British infantry battalions. A long standing Defence Cooperation Agreement between the UK and the Kenyan Government allows up to six British infantry battalions (10,000 service personnel) per year to carry out four-week exercises in the arid Great Rift Valley. Royal Engineers and Royal Army Medical Corps exercises are also carried out and develop civil engineering projects and offer health care assistance to local communities.

The British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) has trained on one of the most sparsely populated areas of the Alberta plain in **Canada** since 1972. Over 400 permanent and 1000 temporary deployed staff equipped with over 1000 vehicles, including Challenger 2 tanks and Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles, provide training for the British Army in a training area the size of Wales. 4 Battlegroups, each containing approximately 1400 soldiers, are trained at BATUS each year.

There are also 750 British Medical Regiment personnel in **Sierra Leone** supporting the international aid effort to tackle Ebola and other RAF personnel are based in Accra, **Ghana** moving equipment and personnel. The UK is also seeking to establish a base in **Oman** – as we shall see later.

Also, as part of NATO - UK armed forces are deployed in more than 80 countries across the world in a range of roles, including:

- 450 soldiers in Camp Bastion, **Afghanistan**;
- Over 275 military training personnel in **Iraq**;
- Early in 2017 the UK, the US, Germany and Canada are leading the deployment of 4 multi-national battalions to **Estonia** (500 UK troops), **Latvia**, **Lithuania** and **Poland** (150 UK troops).

The UK also took over leadership of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force in 2017 in which 3,000 troops based in the UK and Germany joined a 5,000-strong unit ready to move with 5 days' notice.

Perhaps one of the most controversial of British military involvements is the base on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Diego Garcia



A number of military operations by the UK and US would not have been possible but for the British Indian Ocean Territories Island of Diego Garcia, a small island in the Chagos Archipelago. Diego Garcia has been used for major operations by the British & Americans during the Global War on Terror (2001-present), Operation Granby (1991), (NATO)

Operation Herrick (2001-2014), Operation Tellic (2003-2011), Operation Shader (2014 on), Operation Desert Storm (1991), Operation Desert Fox (1998), Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2014), Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2011), and (NATO) Operation Inherent Resolve (2014 on).

In addition, Wikileaks disclosed that the base was also used as a storage section for US cluster bombs as a way of avoiding UK parliamentary oversight and on 21 February 2008 David Miliband, the British Foreign Secretary at that time, admitted that two US rendition flights refuelled there in 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7256587.stm).

The island nation of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean became a British colonial possession in 1810 and remained so until 1968, the year in which it attained independence. Three years prior to independence, in 1965, the UK excised the Chagos archipelago (over 1,000 islands, mostly very small) from Mauritian territory to form the British Indian Ocean

Territory (BIOT) with others from the Seychelles. Between 1968 and 1973 the UK then and gradually depopulated the archipelago's indigenous population. Diego Garcia is the largest island and strategically placed within striking distance of the Middle East and Asia and was then leased to the US for them to set up a military base. There was no monetary arrangement between the US and the UK but a declassified addendum to the 1966 agreement revealed that the UK received a \$14-million discount on the acquisition of the US Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile system.

Families from Mauritius were banned from returning to Chagos and Chagossians have been struggling for re-unification with the Republic of Mauritius, and for the right to return for all Chagossians, ever since.

A Wikileaks disclosure documents how, the UK government proposed that the BIOT become a "marine reserve" in order to prevent the Chagossians returning. The UK Foreign Office claimed that it was an environmental move and necessary to improve the coral populations off east Africa and therefore sub-saharan marine supplies, however, some Chagossians realised that it would also prevent resettlement because it prevent fishing in the protected areas. In fact, on 1 December 2010, a leaked diplomatic cable exchange of 2009 (see: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09LONDON1156_a.html) between British Director of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Colin Roberts and US Political Counselor Richard Mills, shows Roberts asserting that "establishing a marine park would, in effect, put paid to resettlement claims of the archipelago's former residents." Richard Mills concludes: "Establishing a marine reserve might, indeed, as the FCO's Roberts stated, be the most effective long-term way to prevent any of the Chagos Islands' former inhabitants or their descendants from resettling in the BIOT."

The 50-year "lease" of Diego Garcia to the USA ended in 2016 and in 2015 the judgment of a Tribunal held under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, determined it to be illegal for Britain to do anything with Chagos without consulting Mauritius. Britain has said it is willing to allow the return of some Chagossians, if they accept continued colonisation as subjects of the British Indian Ocean Territory – the illegal colony set up after the land grab in 1965. On 23 June 2017, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted in favour of referring the territorial dispute between Mauritius and the UK to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in order to clarify the legal status of the Chagos Islands archipelago in the Indian Ocean. The motion was approved by a majority vote (94 for and 15 against).



Diego Garcia and the US airfield

The UK should support Mauritian sovereignty and the right of return of all Chagossians free from and constraints to recognise a colonial status. They should be paid proper reparations and the military base closed and cleaned-up. The lease on Diego Garcia should be terminated.

More information from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas_military_bases_of_the_United_Kingdom.

US Military Bases in the UK

(see also: <http://www.militarybases.us/>)

During the Second World War the UK allowed the US free access to a number of RAF airfields. US forces have remained in a number of these and other installations which have continued to be used in US military operations and intelligence gathering.

After WW2 the USAF presence remained as part of the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). The legal basis for the US Visiting Force in the UK is primarily the NATO *Status of Forces Agreement* of 1951 (SOFA) and the *Visiting Forces Act* of 1952.

The *Status of Forces Agreements* allow a sending State's military forces to operate within, and at the consent of, the host state. They also provide for the status of military headquarters established in other countries. They may be bilateral or multilateral and there are no formal requirements as to the form, content, length, or title that a SOFA should take.

The *Visiting Forces Act* incorporates the SOFA into UK law. Together, they provide the overarching framework for the stationing of US forces in the UK. The provisions of the VFA were extended to NATO military headquarters in the UK by the *International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act* 1964 and the VFA was extended in 1995 by the *Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement* to cover the forces of states who are

not members of NATO but had agreed to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace plan.



US 8th Air Force bases in the UK in use during WW2

The removal of France from NATO in 1966 by President de Gaulle probably encouraged the US military to keep their bases in the UK and even enhance their military presence here. So, in the 1990s there were something like 100 US manned facilities in the UK although now this has dropped to about 13 or so. Of course, the US presence has not gone unchallenged.

Writing in *the Guardian* in 2014, Seamus Milne said:

"It's almost never discussed in the political mainstream. But thousands of foreign troops have now been stationed in Britain for more than 70 years. There's been nothing like it since the Norman invasion. With the 15-month Dutch occupation of London in 1688-9 a distant competitor, there has been no precedent since 1066 for the presence of American forces in a string of military bases for the better part of a century."

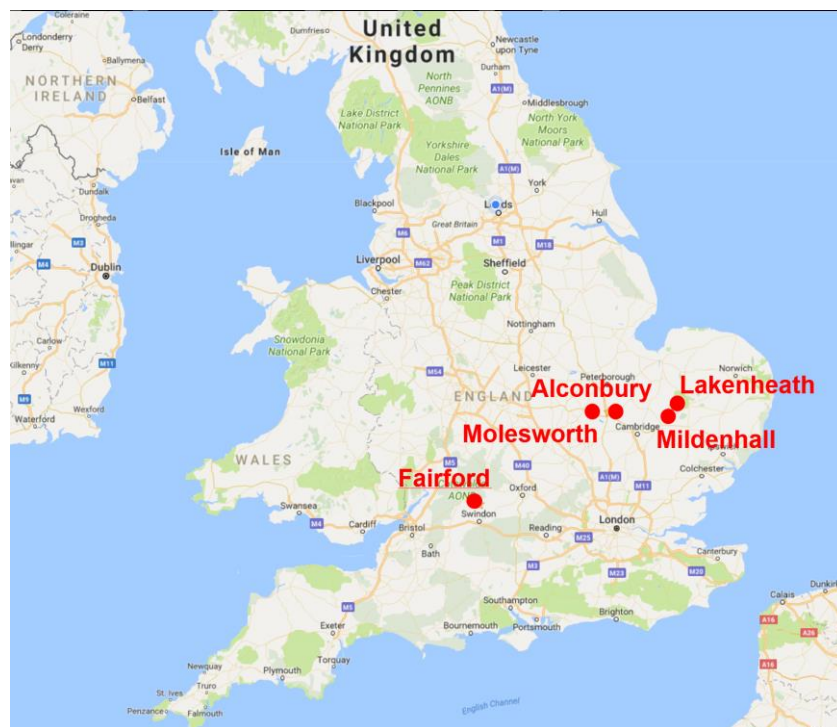
They arrived in 1942 to fight Nazi Germany. But they didn't head home in 1945; instead, they stayed on for the 40-odd years of the cold war, supposedly to repel invasion from the Soviet Union. Nor did they leave when the cold war ended and the Soviet Union collapsed, but were invited to remain as the pivot of the anti-Soviet Nato alliance."

A generation later, there are still nearly 10,000 US military personnel stationed in Britain, based in dozens of secretive facilities. Most of them are in half a dozen major military bases – misleadingly named RAF this or that, but effectively under full American control: Lakenheath, Croughton, Mildenhall and Molesworth among others – along with the National Security Agency and missile defence bases such as Menwith Hill in Yorkshire. British troops are now finally being pulled out of Germany. There is not the slightest suggestion, however, that US forces will be withdrawn from Britain in the foreseeable future. But what are they doing here? Who are they supposed to be defending us from?”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/23/seventy-years-time-close-us-bases>

Good questions!

Major US Air Fields in the UK Currently in Use



Major US Air Fields in the UK currently in use

RAF Mildenhall was opened in the early 1930s to provide British air capabilities in Europe. It saw significant service throughout World War II as an RAF bomber base but was deactivated immediately following the war.

However, it was reopened in 1950 to support B-29 bombers, and subsequently B-50 and B-47 long-range bombers. By the late 1950s, the runways were no longer capable of supporting newer aircraft and control of operations was transferred to the USAF, who used

the base mainly for airlift and transport purposes for several years. Throughout the 1970s, the base was also home to several reconnaissance wings operating over the Soviet Union and the Middle East.



Following the Cold War, Mildenhall has been host to the 100th Air Refueling Wing, the only air refueling wing in Europe. Mildenhall essentially serves as a bridge between the US and Europe and the Middle East, allowing aircraft to refuel mid-air or resupply on the airfield before continuing to their destination.

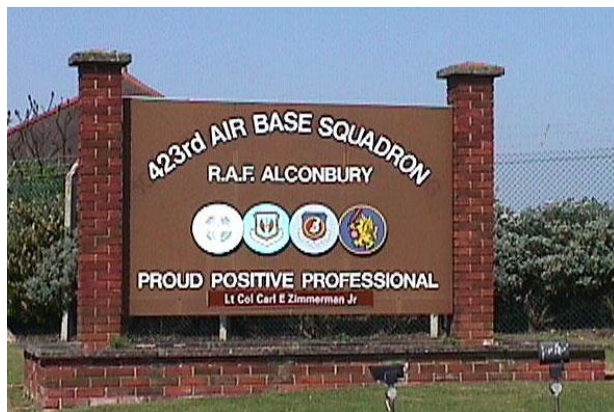


Protest at Mildenhall – peace camp to protest the use of the airfield during the war in Afghanistan

Wherever there is a military base there is usually some opposition and there has been significant protest at Mildenhall – especially during US military operations in the Gulf Wars and Afghanistan.

US operations at Mildenhall are soon to be transferred and the USAF KC-135 air refueling tanker fleet will be transferred to the US Air Base at Ramstein in Germany.

RAF Alconbury - located in Cambridgeshire, in the SE of the UK. Originally one of many camouflaged satellite bases built to “hide” aircraft in when attacked. In 1942, the base was handed over to the US Eighth Air Force and Alconbury became an American base for Liberators flying bombing missions. In December 1942 the Liberators were replaced by B-17s and Alconbury became known as Station 102, fulfilling a variety of roles until it was handed back to the RAF in November 1945.



In 1953 the airfield was reactivated as one of the bases for the US 3rd Air Force, eventually assuming a Cold War role as the home to various reconnaissance squadrons – the 1st and 10th Squadrons of the 10th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing. In 1976, the airfield acquired an additional role as the home of a tactical fighter training squadron flying Northrop F-5E Tigers. Soon after the airfield was substantially remodelled with the construction of 28 hardened aircraft shelters.

The base now hosts the 501st Combat Support Wing and the 423rd Air Base Group, providing mission support to enable US and NATO war fighters to conduct flying operations during expeditionary deployments, theater munitions movements, global command and control communications to forward deployed locations, support for theater intelligence operations and joint/combined training. The US operations at Alconbury are also due to be moved on and the base closed.

RAF Molesworth – also in Cambridgeshire with a similar history to Alconbury. However, the decision in 1980 to house 64 cruise missiles at Molesworth made the station a focus of protest.



On 28 December 1981, members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation on a pilgrimage from Iona Abbey to Canterbury Cathedral established a peace camp at the south-east gate of the station to protest against the planned deployment.

The camp became a link in a Europe-wide network of centres for NVDA in opposition to NATO plans to deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles. In the summer of 1983, the caravans and buses of the Peace Camp were evicted from land adjoining the southeast gate of RAF Molesworth. Only a small brick and concrete chapel called Eirene (Greek for peace) remained, surrounded by barbed wire and for a time floodlit and guarded by the police 24 hours a day to prevent protesters from entering. Eirene was suddenly demolished on the day of the 1986 United States bombing of Libya.

In August 1984, part of the then-unfenced airfield was occupied by a peace camp - *'Rainbow Village'* until 6 February 1985, when 1,500 troops and police were deployed in an operation described as *"perhaps the most dramatic occurrence in all the peace and anti-nuclear campaigns of the 1980s"* in the UK. A 3m high Dannert wire fence was rapidly erected behind which a 5 metres wide no-man's land concrete roadway was constructed along the line of the fence and finally a 3m high Weldmesh steel fence beyond that. Floodlights were installed every 100 yards and MoD Police and armed guards were to patrol the fence 24 hours a day. Secretary of State for Defence Michael Heseltine arrived by RAF helicopter, wearing a camouflage jacket over his suit. The roads around the station were blocked by lorries carrying construction materials and fencing. The cost of the operation to clear and fence RAF Molesworth was in the order of £6.5 million.



The protest at Molesworth in the 1980s

Molesworth was the focus of large protests at Easter 1985 and February 1986, during one of which Bruce Kent from CND attempted to cut through the fence in full view of the police. A protest presence remained outside the station, recording the movement of cruise missiles, until 1990.

On 11 January 1990, the RAF announced the construction of the US European Command's new Joint Analysis Center (JAC) and also based here are NATO's Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC), Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO), National Imaging and Mapping Agency (NIMA), government contractors, National Imaging and mapping Agency (NIMA), Africa Command (AFRICOM) and other organizational units to provide intelligence support for US and NATO missions in the Middle East and the Balkans and provide global assistance in the War on Terror.

This is another base that is due to close and the JAC operations will be transferred to the US base at Croughton.

Mildenhall, Alconbury and Molesworth to close – as part of a US programme to save £320m (\$500m) a year across Europe. The Pentagon said the loss of about 2,000 US

military and civilian personnel is due to relocation away from Mildenhall, but will be offset by the addition of about 1,200 people stationed permanently at Lakenheath.

It was announced in September 2017 that the USAF will leave these bases around 2014 - 2 years later than originally planned.

RAF Lakenheath – situated 7.6 km NE of Mildenhall, was used as a decoy in WW2 and selected for upgrading to a Very Heavy Bomber airfield. It is one of three RAF airfields that was prepared to receive US Army Air Force Boeing B-29 Superfortresses which were tentatively planned to replace some of Eighth Air Force's Third Air Division Consolidated B-24 Liberator groups in the spring of 1945.



As the largest US Air Force base in the UK, Lakenheath hosts the 48th Fighter Wing and supports 3 combat-ready squadrons of F-15E Strike Eagle and F-15C Eagle fighter aircraft. Two squadrons of US F-35 jets (48 of them) will be arriving there by 2020 – the first in Europe.

Almost 4,500 servicemen and women, supported by nearly 2,000 British and American civilians, work for the wing, which includes a separate base at nearby RAF Feltwell. The base is home to F-15 fighter planes, as well as Pave Hawk helicopters, which are used for both humanitarian and military missions including civil search and rescue, medical evacuation and disaster response.

Operations from its runways have included the US bombing of Libya in 1986, code-named the El Dorado Canyon raids. The wing was also the first F-111 fighter unit to deploy to the First Gulf War during the operations code-named Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

It has played a role since 2001 flying combat missions and providing combat support in Operations Enduring Freedom – the name given by the US government to its military operations in Afghanistan – and Iraqi Freedom, the code name for the Iraq war.



Protest at Lakenheath

Nuclear Incidents

US nuclear weapons had been held at Lakenheath since the beginning of the Cold War and incidents have been reported that could have had disastrous consequences. For example:

- **July 27, 1956:** A B-47 bomber crashed into a nuclear weapons storage facility at the **Lakenheath Air Base** in Suffolk, England, during a training exercise. The nuclear weapons storage facility, known as an “igloo,” contained three Mark 6 bombs. Preliminary exams by bomb disposal officers said it was a miracle that one Mark 6 with exposed detonators sheared didn’t explode. The B-47’s crew was killed.
- **Jan 16, 1961:** The under-wing fuel tanks of a US fighter were jettisoned by mistake at **Lakenheath**. The fuel and a hydrogen bomb mounted beneath the plane was

engulfed in flames. It was later discovered that a flaw in the wiring of these bombs could allow excessive heat to bypass the weapon's safety mechanisms and cause a nuclear detonation.



RAF Fairford – one of one of 2-3 airfields outside US capable of handling B2 Stealth bombers, with 2 special hangers and another for re-doing the special anti-radar paint on the planes.

In June 2017 it was reported that, amid growing tensions with Russia, the US had deployed its full range of strategic bombers to Britain for the first time in history. Two B-2 stealth bombers, three B-52H Stratofortress aircraft and three B-1B Lancers were exhibited at the Fairford Air Show. Apparently, the Pentagon considered it necessary to remind Moscow of America's strike capability.



B2 Stealth Bomber at Fairford



The B2 Runway

There have also been rumours that the base may move from its present low-key status to a more active base in the future.



Protest at Fairford

RAF Greenham Common - southeast of Newbury, Berkshire, about 55 miles (89 km) west of London is no longer a military base but certainly worth a mention.



Opened in 1942, it was used by both the RAF and the USAF during the Second World War and the USAF during the Cold War.

It was used to house US nuclear weapons during the cold war and some incidents have been reported:

- **Jan 31, 1958:** the left rear wheel casting of a B-47 failed during an exercise alert. It is not clear where the airbase was situated but Greenham Common Airbase is a possibility. The aircraft carried one weapon in strike configuration and the tail struck the runway rupturing a fuel tank. The aircraft caught fire and burned for seven hours. The high explosive contents did not detonate, but there was some contamination in the immediate area of the crash. The wreckage and the asphalt beneath it were removed and the runway washed down.
- **Sept 25, 1959:** a US aircraft in trouble dropped two large fuel tanks shortly after take-off at Greenham Common, one hit a parked aircraft nearby which had a nuclear bomb on board. Two people were killed in the resulting fire which took 16 hours to extinguish. The area around the base was radioactively contaminated. The incident remains secret until uncovered by CND in 1996.

The base is probably most famous for the protest that was women's movement that developed from the peace camps established from 1981 in protest at the deployment of cruise missiles there.



Dancing on the silos on New Year's Day viewed by US style police cars on the base.

Their 19-year protest drew worldwide media and public attention, often due to the peace women cutting through the fences of the base and even dancing on the silos. They would

also blockade the entrances and track the missiles. (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/sep/02/greenham-common-women-taught-generation-protest>)



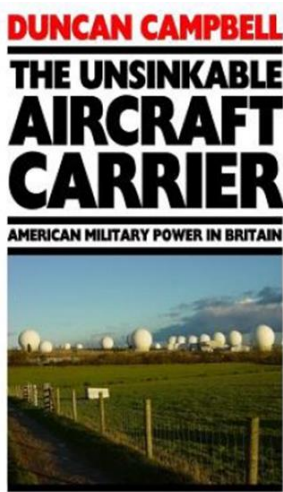
30,000 women protestors "embraced the base" in 1982 and 50,000 did the same a year later.



There were numerous blockades of the gates and the nuclear cruise missile convoys

As a consequence of the protests here and across Europe, Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev eventually signed a treaty that removed a whole range of US the Soviet short range nuclear weapons from Europe. On 11 September 1992, the USAF returned RAF Greenham Common to the Ministry of Defence and on 9 February 1993 the Greenham Common air base was declared surplus to requirements by the Secretary of State for

Defence. In 1997 Greenham Common was designated as public parkland. The common was made a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1985.



The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier – Not all military bases of importance are air fields or depositories of tanks, guns or other field equipment. In 1986 a book by Duncan Campbell revealed how, since the 1940s and 1950s, Britain has become a safe haven for many US bases and facilities. However, alongside the cruise missile silos (e.g. Greenham Common) and nuclear bomber bases is a network of intelligence installations, command centres, communications stations - even hospitals, for use only in war.

Campbell also disclosed the interception capabilities of the NSA (National Security Agency – the agency responsible for global monitoring, collection, and processing of information and data for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence purposes) at the US base at Menwith Hill. He also described the existence of UKUSA, a multilateral agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence between the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The alliance of intelligence operations is also known as the “*Five Eyes*” which emerged from an informal agreement related to the 1941 Atlantic Charter. Due to its status as a secret treaty, its existence was not known to the Prime Minister of Australia until 1973, and it was not disclosed to the public until 2005. On 25 June 2010, the full text of the agreement was eventually released by the UK and the US and can now be viewed online here:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukusa/>.

In the 1950s several other countries also joined the community as “*third party*” participants such as Denmark (1954) and West Germany (1955). According to Edward Snowden, the third parties are not automatically exempt from intelligence targeting. According to an internal NSA document leaked by Snowden, “*We (the NSA) can, and often do, target the signals of most 3rd party foreign partners.*”

Also, the Five Eyes are cooperating with various 3rd Party countries in at least two groups:

- The "*Nine Eyes*", consisting of the Five Eyes plus Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway.
- The "*Fourteen Eyes*", consisting of the same countries as the Nine Eyes plus Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Sweden. The actual name of this group is SIGINT Seniors Europe (SSEUR) and its purpose is coordinating the exchange of military signals intelligence among its members.

These intelligence gathering stations are the new front line for the military. Whether it is intercepting all forms of electronic messages and using the information to pinpoint targets or the relaying of command and control information for drone pilots, or the transmission of photoreconnaissance from and by satellites, it all feeds in to the global US/NATO military machine.

It is worth highlighting some of those in the network of signals intelligence gathering and communications that operate in the UK.

RAF Croughton is one of the most important of these. Located in Northamptonshire, in the central part of the UK. It is one of the widest military switchboards of Europe. It also deals with more than 30% of the American communicational operations on the old continent.



During World War II it was designated to receive damaged aircraft and repair them. After World War II the base was inactivated. It was turned into a storage site between 1947 and 1950 and given to the US at the end of 1950. It became an extremely important communications base and indirectly served in all US conflicts from the Gulf War to those in Afghanistan and Iraq.



Croughton hosts the 422nd Air Base Group - responsible for providing full force and communications support to serve the interests of the US and NATO regardless of the location and mission objectives – through one of the biggest military telecommunications switchboards in Europe. It handles a third of all the US military communications in Europe and also has a satellite station not far away at Barford St John, near Bloxham

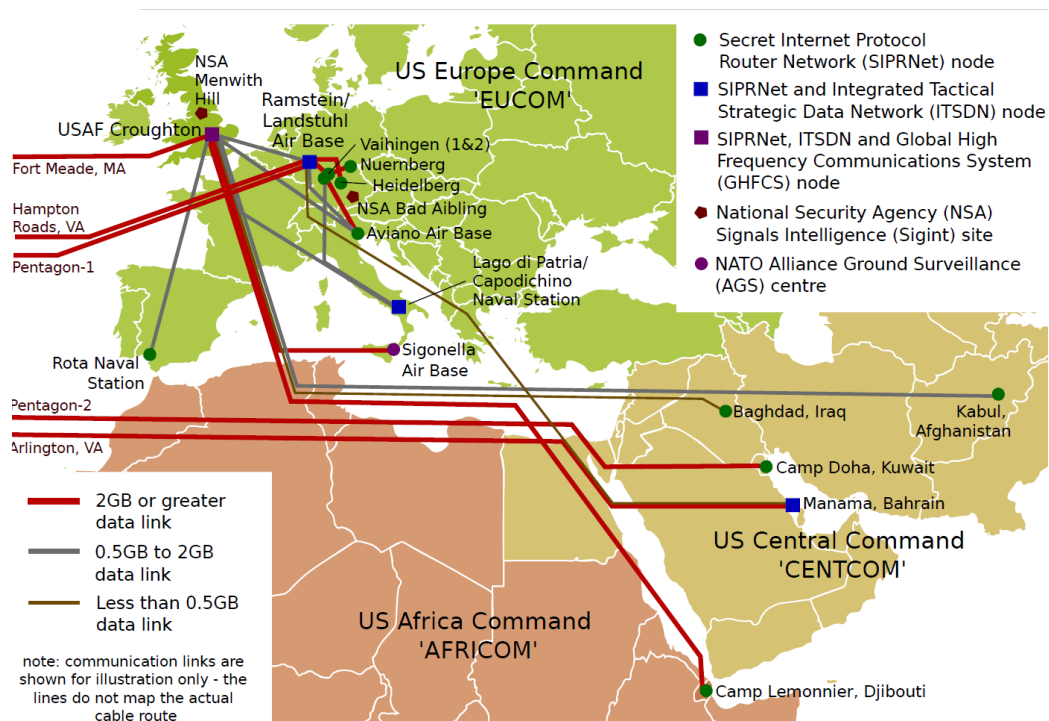
In November 2013, *the Independent* published a report on how the base is used to route vast amounts of data captured by Washington's "Stateroom" network of listening posts in diplomatic premises back to America for analysis by the CIA and the NSA.

(<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/exclusive-raf-croughton-base-sent-secrets-from-merkel-s-phone-straight-to-the-cia-8923401.html>) The network is at the centre of revelations that the NSA intercepted a mobile phone used by Mrs Merkel. A spying "nest" on the roof Washington's Berlin embassy was abruptly turned off following a row between Germany and America about the eavesdropping. Documents provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden imply that any material gathered from the Berlin embassy listening post would have been relayed back to a joint CIA/NSA facility in Maryland via the secure link within Croughton.



Tom Watson, former defence minister and deputy chairman of the Labour Party at that time, said there was an urgent need for “public scrutiny” of the activities at the base. He said: *“The use of RAF Croughton by the NSA, CIA and other US officials puts our country at real risk of complicity in both unlawful eavesdropping and the unlawful killing of civilians overseas by the US. These allegations also undermine our relations with other key allies.”*

A secure fibre-optic link was made between the base and the US air base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti in 2013 to co-ordinate drone strikes over Yemen. The following year the US announced it would spend £200m on a project to upgrade the base and further concentrate US intelligence activity to provide *“world-class combat support”* for activities including *“global strike operations”*.



Washington is to turn Croughton into one of its largest intelligence hubs outside the mainland United States (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/pentagon-to-open-major-200m-intelligence-centre-in-britain-a6942856.html>). It is to be the site for an ultra-secure

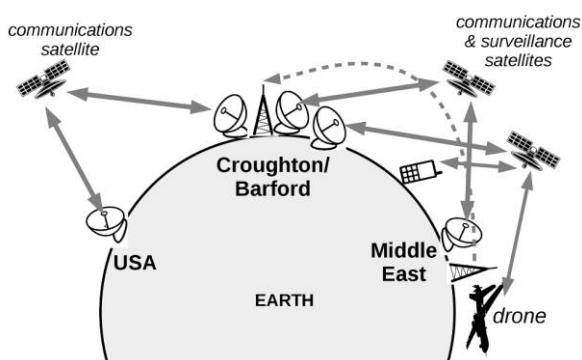
intelligence centre staffed by up to 1,250 personnel and covering operations in Africa, a current focus for US counterterrorism activities. The \$317m (£189m) project, which includes an installation for the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon's main military espionage service, underlines RAF Croughton's position as a centre for clandestine and classified US communications in Britain.

Due to be completed this year, campaigners and senior politicians agree that the massive investment in Croughton has raised fresh questions about the oversight of US bases in Britain (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/05/us-airbases-britain-1950s>).

Details show that the upgrade will involve the "*consolidation*" of six existing US intelligence groups, currently based at Molesworth, into a single facility at Croughton. The Pentagon said that this would save at least \$75m a year and it will also result in a substantial further concentration of US intelligence at Croughton, whose official purpose is to provide "*world-class combat support*" for activities including "*global strike operations*".

Involvement in US Drone Strikes

In October 2016 human rights groups pointed out that recent job advertisements indicate that personnel serving at RAF bases in the UK are helping to identify targets for drone strikes. One job advertised at Molesworth was for an "*all source analyst*", in support of US operations in Africa. The suitable candidate will "*perform a variety of advanced targeting operations ... in support of employment of GPS guided weapons, weaponeering and collateral estimation, as well as utilizing the tools required for advanced targeting*".



The CV of a US military analyst, uploaded to a recruitment site, states that he was an MQ-9 Reaper ISR Mission Intelligence Coordinator at Molesworth. The MQ-9 is the US's chief strike drone, capable of firing Hellfire missiles and dropping laser-guided GBU 12 Paveway II bombs.

Molesworth has also been recruiting "*full motion video analysts*" to study footage taken by drones and other surveillance craft in order to identify potential targets. The consultancy giant Booz Allen Hamilton is advertising for a "*maritime multi-level targeting analyst*" at the same base. The job involves providing "*comprehensive assessments... of intelligence*

data” to “support the client targeting cycle in order to answer intelligence questions and provide recommendations for further action or collection”.

The MoD insists that the US does not fly drones from the UK but Jennifer Gibson from the human rights group *Reprieve* declares that the job specifications indicate UK complicity in the US drone programme and that “*simply to say that drones are not flown from the UK is missing the point, if it is personnel on British soil that are at the top of the so-called ‘kill chain’ and British agencies who are feeding targets into those lists.*” Reprieve believes that “*the British government has questions to answer over its own involvement in this secret war*” (see: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/29/drones-us-kill-chain-raf-britain>).



Protest at Croughton during “Keep Space for Peace Week”

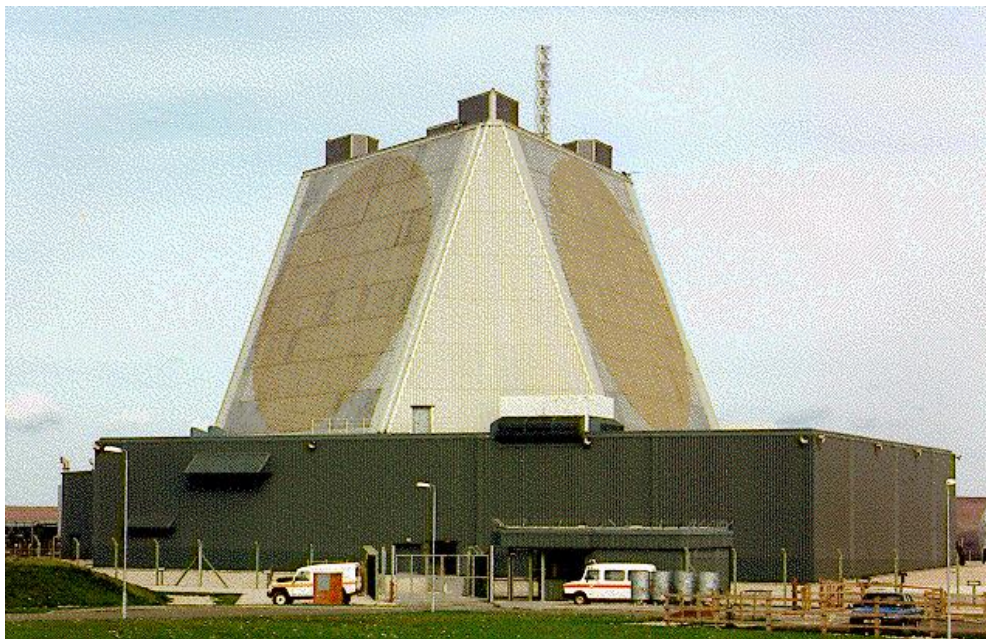
See also: <http://www.fraw.org.uk/croughtonwatch/index.shtml>

US Bases in Yorkshire



Two important US bases in Yorkshire

RAF Fylingdales is a US/UK Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) and US Space Surveillance and Missile Defence radar facility - a command, control and communications installation for the United States military.



The area to the north, east and south of Snod Hill on the North Yorkshire Moors had been used as a military firing range from the 1st World War until the 1950s. The US North

Atlantic Relay communications system (NARS) was developed using Fylingdales. With the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles the US military needed forwarded radar bases to cover the north and east towards the then Soviet Union. It was the time of the Cold War, the policy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) and “*four minute*” warning of nuclear attack. Fylingdales continues to be a vital part of the threat and use of nuclear weapons and this includes the Trident system, as well as management of any war.

The site of the radar was originally planned for Fylingdales Moor which is now a conservation area somewhat to east, Snod Hill being higher ground was more suitable for the radar system. It is part of a chain of U.S BMEWS to cover the north and east, the other two being Thule in Greenland and Clear in Alaska.

The first radars, opened in 1963, were housed in 3 radomes on concrete plinths. They were operated mechanically and covered a distance of 3000 miles to the north and east of Fylingdales. With the development of computers, satellites and weapons in space, Fylingdales became even more of a part of the U.S war fighting machine.

In 2001 a new radar was built. This was in the form of the truncated pyramid and is a Solid State Phased Array radar covering the same distance of 3000 miles but with a 360degree coverage and automatically covering the whole area at the same time. The original three radomes were demolished. A weld-mesh fence, and an electric fence was established directly around all the buildings within the base, together with razor wire, police dogs and cameras and lighting. So, while the security was upgraded, the MOD controlled land is less (but not absolutely free of restrictions) and areas of moorland to the east, north and south are not fenced in.

It was not until after the opening of the radar that it was officially announced that Fylingdales was part of the U.S Missile Defence programme and the system was upgraded again in 2010 to enable more accurate tracking and targeting of objects such as missiles and it was fully integrated into the U.S. system.

The installations of a MILSTAR antennae and the SATCOM radar within the base and periodic updates of computer systems, indicate an upgrade of the facilities to watch and gather information of other country satellites, satellite interception, targeting and war fighting capability.

There are no missiles or bombs within Fylingdales but *The Independent* has reported that the British Government secretly agreed to a US request to station NMD missile interceptors there in late 2004. This has subsequently been denied by the Ministry of Defence (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3750294.stm>).



Protest at Fylingdales

See also: <https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/campaigns/fylingdales/>

RAF Menwith Hill is a huge US National Security Agency and National Reconnaissance Office base with surveillance, drone operation, missile defence and military intelligence functions. Menwith Hill is one of the United States' most important overseas bases, playing an integral role in the broader strategy of US global power projection. Nominally an RAF base, it is operated and controlled by the National Security Agency. Established in total secrecy by President Truman in 1952, the NSA is responsible for all US signals intelligence (SIGINT) activities, essentially the interception of electronic communications, both military and commercial. During the Cold War, the NSA rapidly expanded its operations and established a global interception network with intelligence analysis at its headquarters in Fort Meade near Washington.



The MoD purchased nearly a square mile of farmland and moorland near Harrogate in the 1950s, in preparation for a US SIGINT base. But it was only after the development of satellite technologies that Menwith Hill took on its (in)famous characteristics, with giant radome/golf ball structures. From a total of four in the early 1970s, there are now over thirty, reflecting the growth in satellite communications and the base's interception capabilities. Personnel numbers have also expanded from 400 to over 2,000, mainly US military and civilian personnel and US contractors, supplemented by UK civilian workers and an unspecified number of GCHQ personnel. Essentially, Menwith Hill is run as an

American enclave, with its own facilities and with the highest security clearance reserved for senior DoD personnel and US contractors.

The fundamental issue is how the NSA has carried out a secret, multi-billion dollar investment programme at its regional centres to take advantage of advances in technology for integrated intelligence using electronic interceptions and satellite imagery. The NSA and other US intelligence agencies represented at Menwith Hill are now capable of overseeing 'real-time' military operations, identifying low-visibility targets and coordinating special operations forces and remote control technologies like drones. This is described by US strategists as 'tightening the kill chain'. (<https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/campaigns/menwith-hill/>)

In September last year, the online investigative journal *The Intercept* revealed that NSA documents provided by Edward Snowden showed that intelligence gathered through satellite technology at the Menwith Hill NSA spy base help the US with targeted killings. Advanced surveillance programmes at Menwith Hill have located '*suspected terrorists accessing the internet in remote parts of the world*' and '*provided support for conventional British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.*'

There is clear evidence that the UK and US governments work together to aid Saudi Arabia's serious breaches of international law by targeting civilians in Yemen. Britain's new Foreign Minister, Boris Johnson, has swept aside the evidence and is silencing the media in a cynical move to maintain lucrative UK arms sales. The UK government has misled parliament by denying its role in these illegal operations. In his book, *Web of Deceit*, historian Mark Curtis lays out "*Britain's real role in the world*" and concludes that, for several centuries, the primary function of the British state is to aid British companies in getting their hands on other countries' resources. This means initiating war, military interventions, threats, bullying, and other aggressive actions, usually in support of the US and/or NATO.



This global imperialism is dressed up in propaganda as “*countering terrorism*”, “*improving world security*”, “*working with our allies*” and similar pieties propagated by the 'mainstream' media. In this way, Britain is partly responsible for appalling acts of violence, while proclaiming its supposed desire for 'peace' and 'security'. The siting of these critical installations on British soil underlines the close integration of British and American intelligence activities and is an example of how the 800 or so foreign military bases spread around the world are utilised to further the empirical reach of the US.



Protest at Menwith Hill

It has been made clear by ministers that there are now no circumstances in which British governments envisage the use of military force, except in harness with the US. Even Britain's own colonial-era overseas bases, such as Diego Garcia, have long been handed over to the US military, while its inhabitants were expelled. Britain's fake patriots who bleat about the power of the European Commission are more than happy to subordinate the

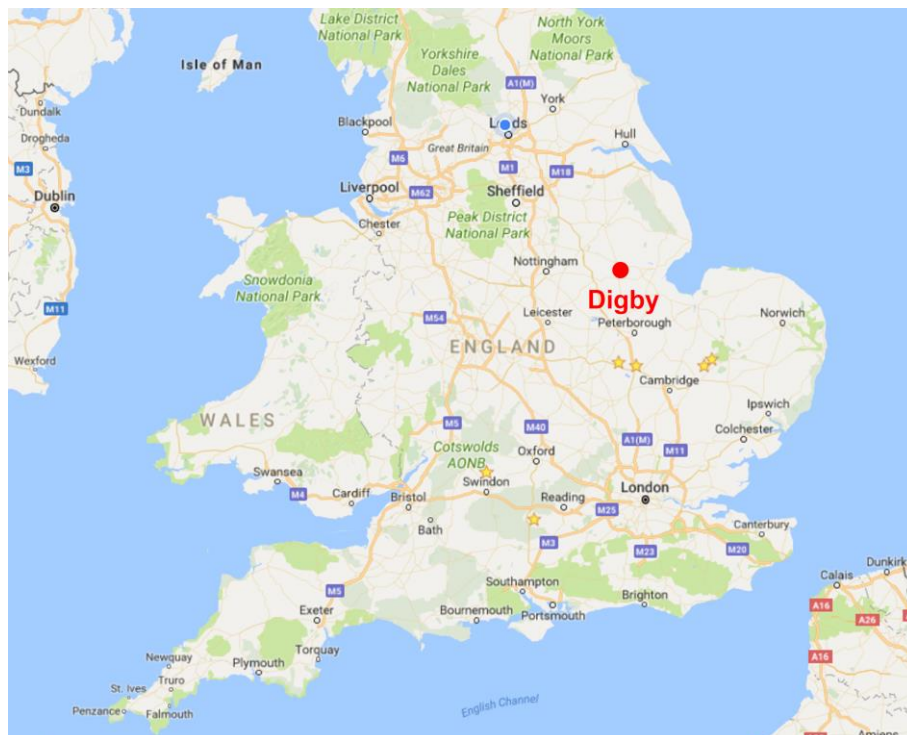
country's foreign policy to the Pentagon and allow its forces permanent bases on British soil.



Demonstration outside the gates of Menwith Hill every Tuesday evening between 6 & 7:30 pm.

Weekly protests are organised by the Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign

RAF Digby - the American presence here is a quiet one but has a profound impact, as soldiers, sailors, and airmen work together with their British counterparts to produce critical intelligence on a wide variety of targets - all tasked by GCHQ.



The SIGINT mission here is incredibly diverse and tailored to intelligence needs from STRATCOM, NORTHCOM, EUCOM, and CENTCOM in addition to UK customers --

including direct support to UK forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. DIRNSA's vision of increasing collaboration with Second Party partners is a reality on the Digby ops floor every day, with collectors, linguists, and analysts working as a virtual team with their counterparts at GRSOC, MRSOC , and the new Alaska Mission Operations Center.

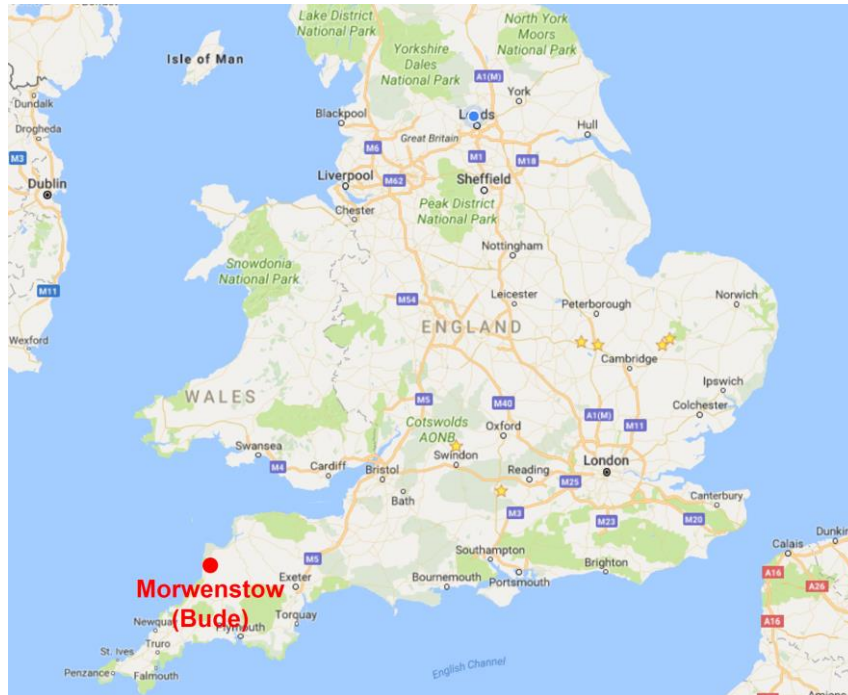
Digby's function is not limited to that of a passive observer, however. Its central mission, one GCHQ document explains, is to *“produce and deliver near-real time intelligence ... in order to support military and contingency operations.”* It has been integral to a program code-named “AIRHANDLER,” for example, which uses surveillance equipment on Predator and Reaper drones to gather data that is then passed to military commanders. During one six-month period in 2009, there were 148 AIRHANDLER missions flown out of Digby – averaging about five each week. The base was also equipped with a capability enabling it to perform “(near) real-time co-location” of GSM cellphones.

Indications are that Digby's assistance to military forces on the ground has centered around missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, where British and American troops have been deployed. But the facility also carries out a broader global role when it comes to providing tactical military support. One confidential document describes Digby as a “unique” site because it has a joint British and American navy surveillance department within it. This department – known as a Maritime Cryptologic Integration Center – backs up mobile sea, air, and land units operating in parts of the North Atlantic Ocean, the Barents, Baltic, and Black seas, and across North and sub-Saharan Africa.



RAF Digby

Morwenstow



In the early 1960s, developments occurred which appear to have prompted the establishment of the facility now known as GCHQ Bude. In 1962, a satellite receiving station for the commercial communication satellites of Intelsat was established at Goonhilly Downs, just over a hundred kilometres south-southwest of Morwenstow.

The downstream link from the Intelsat satellites could easily be intercepted by placing receiver dishes nearby in the satellites' "footprint". For that, the land at Cleave was allotted to the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in 1967 and construction of the satellite interception station began in 1969. Two ninety-foot dishes appeared first, followed by smaller dishes in the ensuing years. The station was signposted as "CSOS Morwenstow", with "CSOS" standing for Composite Signals Organisation Station. In 2001, a third large dish appeared and the station became known as "GCHQ Bude".



From its inception, the station has been an Anglo-American co-operative project. It was the NSA that paid for most of the infrastructure and the technology. The running costs, like payments for the staff, were paid by GCHQ, who also provided the land. The intelligence that was collected by the Bude satellite station was shared among NSA and GCHQ and was also jointly processed.



The Intelligence Services Act 1994 grants GCHQ the power "to monitor or interfere with electromagnetic, acoustic and other emissions and any equipment producing such emissions and to obtain and provide information derived from or related to such emissions or equipment." This includes Blackberry Messenger and audio messages.

In 1963, TAT-3, an undersea cable linking the United Kingdom to the US, was laid from Tuckerton, New Jersey, US to Widemouth Bay, Cornwall, just ten kilometres south of the site at Cleave Camp. The British General Post Office routinely monitored all

communications passing along the TAT-3 cable, forwarding any messages they felt were relevant to the security services.

The site at Cleave Camp presented an opportunity to monitor submarine cable traffic from the nearby landing points, while at the same time intercepting communications meant for the commercial satellite ground station at Goonhilly Downs.

The TAT-14 undersea cable landing at Bude was identified as one of few assets of "Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources" of the US on foreign territory in a diplomatic cable leaked to Wikileaks.

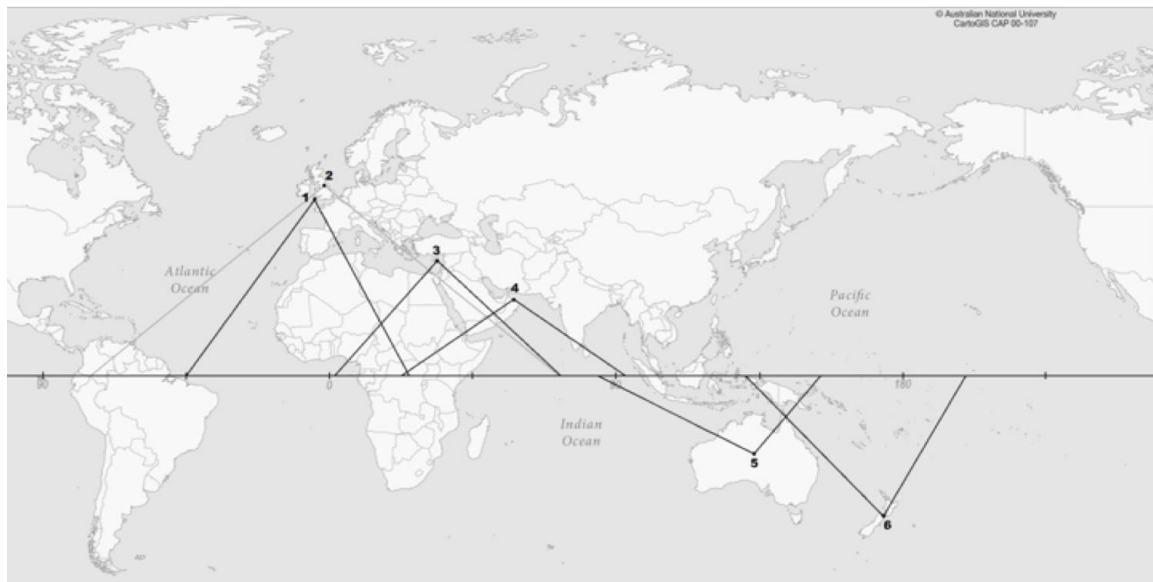
In 2010, the NSA paid GCHQ £15.5m for redevelopments at the site.

There are 21 satellite antennae of various sizes and, on the basis of their position, their elevation and their azimuth angle, the antennae are generally orientated towards satellites of the INTELSAT, Intersputnik and INMARSAT communications networks over the Atlantic Ocean, Africa and the Indian Ocean, as well as towards the Middle East and mainland Europe. Somewhere between 2011 and 2013, a torus antenna was installed, which is able to receive the signals of up to 35 satellites simultaneously. This antenna is not covered by a radome, as shown below.



The Torus antenna at Morwenstow (right)

Staff are drawn from GCHQ (UK) and the NSA (U.S.) and the station is operated under the UKUSA agreement, gathering data for the ECHELON signals intelligence (SIGINT) network. Comparable stations in operation include Menwith Hill (UK), Sugar Grove (West Virginia, U.S.), Yakima (Washington, U.S.), Sabana Seca (Puerto Rico), Misawa (Japan), Pine Gap (Australia), Geraldton (Australia), GCSB Waihopai (New Zealand) and GCSB Tangimoana (New Zealand) that cover other INTELSAT areas such as South America and the Pacific Ocean.



Torus sites and coverage of the geostationary satellite belt

1. Morwenstow 2. Menwith Hill 3. GCHQ Ayios Nikolaos, Cyprus 4. Seeb, Oman 5. Pine Gap, Australia
6. Waihopai, New Zealand

In June 2013, *The Guardian*, using documents leaked by Edward Snowden, revealed the existence of an operation codenamed Tempora, whereby GCHQ is able to tap into data which flows along undersea cables and then store it for up to 30 days, to assess and analyse it. The article refers to a three-year trial set up at GCHQ Bude which, by mid 2011, was probing more than 200 internet connections.

A further *Guardian* report in December 2013 stated that eavesdropping efforts to target charities, German government buildings, the Israeli Prime Minister and an EU commissioner centred on activities run from GCHQ Bude.

GCHQ Bude was featured extensively in the September 11, 2014 BBC2 *Horizon* television programme: "Inside the Dark Web". This programme estimated that 25% of all internet traffic travels through Cornwall. Dr Joss Wright of the University of Oxford Internet Institute explained how mirror images of the signals running down submarine Ethernet cables are used to gather and analyse data. The programme claimed that this procedure involves an optical tap device which is inserted at the submarine cable repeater station. A second copy of the data then travels to GCHQ, while the original carries on its intended journey. GCHQ, it was claimed, then have three days to replay the data. It was stated that everything that comes across the internet can theoretically be accessed, including emails, websites, BitTorrent downloads, films that have been watched etc. Wright added that internal documents show that in 2011, 200 10-gigabit cables coming into Cornwall were being tapped by GCHQ. Dr Wright said that the entire digitised contents of the British Library could be transferred down that set of cables in about 40 seconds. On the same

programme, Tim Berners-Lee explained how huge volumes of data are analysed by GCHQ computer programmes to identify trends of communication which are deemed to require further examination.

On November 20, 2014, Channel 4 News broadcast an investigation prepared in collaboration with German broadcaster WDR. This report revealed that a leading UK communications company co-operated with GCHQ to allow access to data, including that carried by a rival Indian telecommunications company. The broadcast detailed an operation centred on fibre-optic cables surfacing at Porthcurno beach and Sennen Cove in Cornwall, with data travelling to a nearby cable landing station at Skewjack Farm, and then onwards to GCHQ Bude.

Right to Protest Challenged

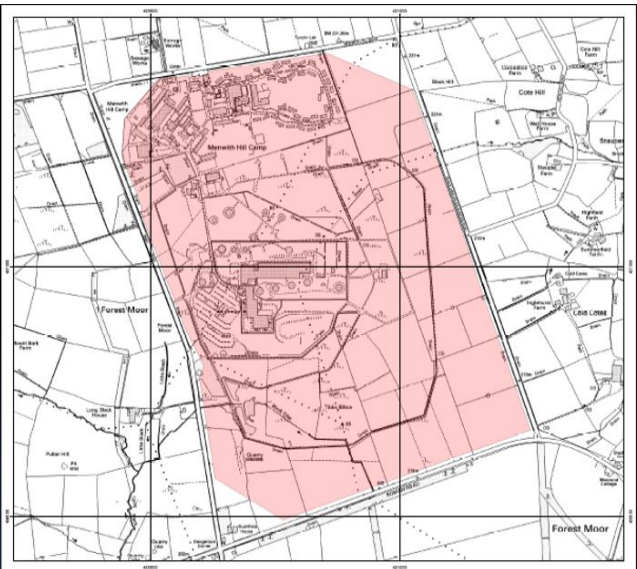
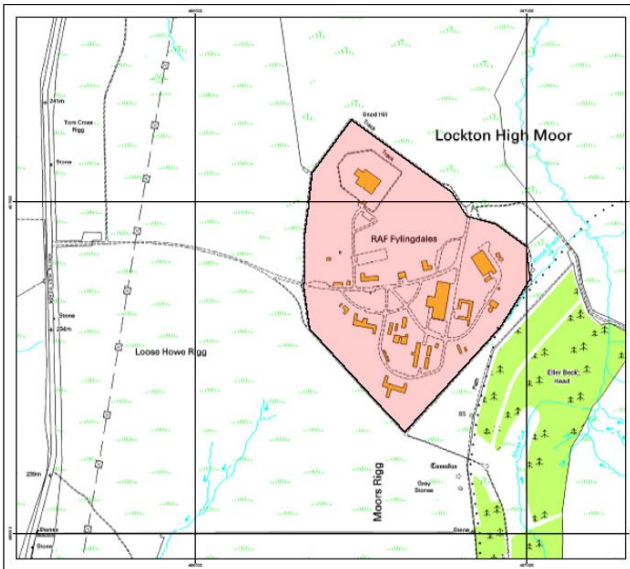


The MoD also wants to introduce “draconian” new powers to tighten security and limit access to US airbases in Britain – a list of nearly 150 military facilities where by-laws are being introduced or revised amid criticism that the new rules are being used to impose unprecedented levels of secrecy around sensitive sites including Croughton, Menwith Hill and Fylingdales.

The new regulations designate an outer “controlled area” around each facility, where a wide-ranging list of banned activities applies, and an inner “protected area” with more stringent restrictions.

Among the 20 activities to be banned within the controlled area are camping “in tents, caravans, trees or otherwise”, digging, engaging in “any trade or business” or grazing any animal. Also among the offences, which can result in an individual being “taken into custody without warrant”, is a failure to pick up dog waste or causing damage to “any crops, turfs, plants, roots or trees”.

The list of 10 banned actions within the protected area includes a prohibition on taking “any visual image of any person or thing”.



Designated areas at Fylingdales (left) and Menwith Hill (right)

